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# Section 401 Water Quality Certification: Protecting Missouri's Wetlands

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Water Protection Program fact sheet

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For much of our history, many people thought wetlands were useless swamps filled with mosquitoes. Today, we know that wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems in the world, comparable to rain forests and coral reefs. A rich source of diversity, wetlands are home to a wide variety of plant and animal species that are crucial to a healthy environment.

Many species of birds and mammals rely on wetlands for food, water and shelter, especially during migration and breeding seasons.

People depend on wetlands, too. Wetlands filter pollutants from our drinking water, provide natural flood control and help prevent our shorelines from eroding. Wetlands are an important part of our natural resources, worthy of our respect and deserving of our protection.

Unfortunately, more than half of the wetlands in the lower 48 states have already been lost as a result of drainage and filling. In its early history, Missouri had as much as 4.8 million acres of wetlands. By 1980, the number of wetlands in the state had dropped dramatically, to 643,000 acres. Protecting and restoring our wetlands is one of today's most critical environmental challenges.

## Protecting wetlands

The federal government protects wetlands through regulations like Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

Missouri protects its wetlands by regulating certain activities through Section 401 Water Quality Certification. This certification is how the state makes sure that a project won't violate our water quality standards. Any activity that involves dumping dredged or fill material into water (including wetlands) must have a 401 Certification. Some of those activities might include channeling a stream, or constructing levees, dams or dikes. To protect water quality, the department works with applicants to avoid or minimize the project's impacts to water. If those impacts cannot be avoided, the department also seeks mitigation for the impacts.

## Applying for 401 Certification

Applying for a Section 401 Water Quality Certification is a two step process.

1. Before you begin any project in a wetland, even those on your own property, it is crucial for you to contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers first. They will determine if you need a 404 Permit.



2. If the Corps indicates you must apply for a 404 Permit, then you must also apply for a 401 Certification from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. After you apply for a 401 certification, the department has 60 days to respond to a complete application. A fee of \$75 is required upon completion of an individual 401 Certification.

## **For more information**

### **Section 404 - Federal Clean Water Act permits**

#### **Map of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers districts**

- Visit our Web page at [www.dnr.mo.gov/wpscd/wpcp/401/corps-map3.gif](http://www.dnr.mo.gov/wpscd/wpcp/401/corps-map3.gif)  
Use the online map to determine which U.S. Army Corps of Engineers district regulatory office you may need to call about a Section 404 permit.

#### **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - District Regulatory office phone numbers**

- Kansas City District - Kansas City Regulatory Office (816) 983-3990
- Kansas City District - Missouri State Regulatory office (Jefferson City) (573) 634-2248
- Kansas City District - Truman Satellite Office (Warsaw) (660) 438-6697
- Little Rock District (501) 324-5295
- Memphis District (901) 544-3473
- Rock Island District (309) 794-5373
- St. Louis District (314) 331-8575

### **Section 401 Water Quality Certification**

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
Water Protection Program  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176  
1-800-361-4827 or (573) 751-1300 office  
(573) 526-1146 fax  
Web: [www.dnr.mo.gov/wpscd/wpcp/401/wpcp-401.htm](http://www.dnr.mo.gov/wpscd/wpcp/401/wpcp-401.htm)  
E-mail: [wp401cert@dnr.mo.gov](mailto:wp401cert@dnr.mo.gov)